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TAGS: PREL PGOV HR
SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - FEBRUARY 6, 2009

¶11. (U) VAGRANT ARRESTED FOR HIGH-PROFILE "MAFIA-STYLE" MURDER: Police announced on February 6 that they arrested a 60-year old vagrant for the October murder of Ivana Hodak, the daughter of a prominent defense attorney. The murder last October led to a massive shake-up in the police, the replacement of the Interior and Justice Ministers, as well as a raft of new anti-crime legislation. The case received widespread media speculation that the murder was a message to Hodak's father who is defending former general Zagorec, on trial for embezzling diamonds during the Homeland War in the early 1990s, by mafia groups or that Ms. Hodak herself had connections to organized crime. Police say they found the murder weapon in the barn where the vagrant was living when they questioned him for not having any identification. The police ran the gun through forensics which produced a match to the weapon used in the Hodak murder. The vagrant was unknown to investigators in the murder case but upon finding the weapon, they discovered that the accused had blamed Hodak's father for the loss of his job 15 years ago. The police believe that the accused blamed his resulting hardships on Hodak's father and decided to exact revenge by killing the daughter. (CZimmer)

¶12. (U) MEMBERS OF MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD ARRIVE IN CROATIA TO TRAIN FOR JOINT OMLT WITH CROATIA:
On February 2, 2009, the Minnesota National Guard portion of the next Croatian Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) to serve in Afghanistan arrived in Croatia. The dozen soldiers will work side-by-side with the Croatian soldiers for the next seven weeks to develop the skills and the teamwork needed for their joint deployment to Afghanistan. This joint OMLT with the Minnesota National Guard will have a Combat Support focus and is one of two new OMLTs that Croatia is scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in March. The second is a purely Croatian OMLT which will train an Afghan National Army (ANA) garrison unit. (CDavis)

¶13. (U) MFA REPORTING THAT FRANCE APPROVED CROATIA'S NATO ACCESSION PROTOCOL:
The MFA issued a press release on February 4 stating that it received notification that the French Senate approved Croatia's accession protocol, and that the lower chamber had also ratified the protocol. The MFA said that by its count, France was the 20th NATO member country whose legislative branch had finished ratifying the protocol. (PD'Amico)

¶14. (SBU) NEW PARTY FOR SERB MINORITY EMERGES IN VUKOVAR:
The New Serb Party (NSS- Nova Srpska Stranka) was inaugurated in Vukovar on February 1, 2009 and the approximately 100 members unanimously elected Svetislav Ladjarevic as party president and Mirko Jagetic and Ljubomir Radic as vice presidents. All three had been members of the largest ethnic-Serb party, the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), but were tossed out by SDSS leadership last December.

Nonetheless, the formation of the NSS is a sign of discontent that exists among some in the Serb community regarding the SDSS party president Vojislav Stanimirovic and vice-president Milorad Pupovac's attempts to consolidate influence and portray the SDSS as the only viable political option for Serbs in Croatia. The NSS plans to run independently in the upcoming local elections in Vukovar-Srijem and Osijek-Baranja counties, but it has not yet decided on any of its candidates for mayor. The NSS is the third party in Croatia representing the interests of Croatia's Serb minority and eventually wants to expand its party presence to other areas of Croatia with high concentrations of Serbs. The final option for Serbs in Croatia is the lesser known Party of Danubian-Basin Serbs. Meanwhile, the SDSS, which garnered three seats in national parliament in the last general election, opened a branch office in Pula to better represent the approximately 6, 600 Serbs living in Istria. (DMeges)

¶5. (U) DCM SPEAKS ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM TO ZAGREB HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Deputy Chief of Mission Vivian Walker gave a lecture about the American Dream on January 28 to over 60 Zagreb high school students. Drawing on themes from U.S. history, politics, culture, and literature, the DCM discussed contemporary social issues in both the United States and Croatia. The speech generated numerous questions about President Obama and the priorities of the new administration.

This lecture is a part of Embassy Zagreb's continuing efforts to explain American values to the successor generation in Croatia. (KWetzel)

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